

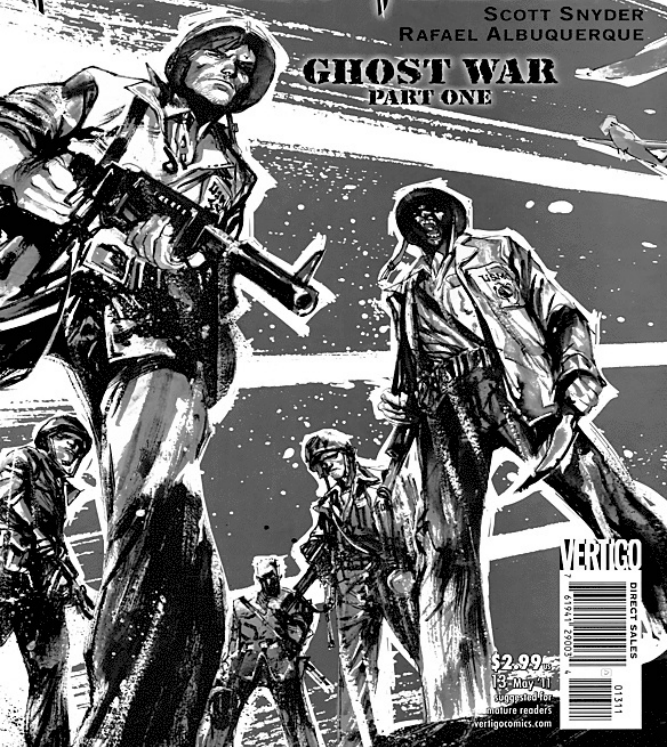
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AMERICAN VAMPIRE

SCOTT SNYDER
RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE

GHOST WAR PART ONE



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AMERICAN VAMPIRE

SCOTT SNYDER

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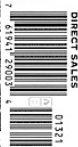


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"THIS IS WHAT
WE KNOW..."

"THROUGHOUT HISTORY,
VAMPIRES HAVE SECRETLY
WALKED AMONG US, HUNTING
HUMANS AND WIELDING POWER
FROM THE SHADOWS."

"BUT AT THE DAWN OF THE 20TH CENTURY,
A NEW SPECIES OF VAMPIRE WAS BORN IN
THE AMERICAN WEST--A NOTORIOUS
OUTLAW NAMED SKINNER SWEET."

"SWEET EMERGED FROM THE
GRAVE A NEW KIND OF
VAMPIRE: STRONGER, FASTER
AND POWERED BY THE SUN.
FOR NEARLY FORTY YEARS,
SWEET LIVED AS THE ONLY
ONE OF HIS KIND..."

"...UNTIL 1925, WHEN, FOR REASONS
UNKNOWN TO US, HE CREATED A
SECOND AMERICAN VAMPIRE, HIS
ONLY KNOWN PROTÉGÉ--A YOUNG
ACTRESS NAMED PEARL JONES."

"BUT RATHER THAN JOIN SWEET
IN HIS SPORADIC WAR WITH THE
COMMON VAMPIRE SPECIES,
JONES PARTED WAYS WITH HER
MAKER, LEAVING HOLLYWOOD WITH
HER HUSBAND, A HUMAN MUSICIAN
NAMED HENRY PRESTON..."

SKINNER SWEET

"FOR NEARLY TEN YEARS,
JONES AND PRESTON
LIVED IN HIDING.

"UNTIL OUR ORGANIZATION
LOCATED THEM IN NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA IN 1936.

"AFTER SOME DIFFICULTY,
WE WERE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE
A DEAL WITH HENRY
"UNBEKNOWNST TO PEARL"
OFFERING THEM PROTECTION...

"...IN EXCHANGE FOR
KNOWLEDGE OF THE AMERICAN
VAMPIRE'S WEAKNESS. JUST AS
THE COMMON VAMPIRE SPECIES
IS VULNERABLE TO WOOD, THE
AMERICAN KIND IS VULNERABLE
TO GOLD.

"NEEDLESS TO SAY,
SWEET WAS...
NONPLUSSED AT
OUR DISCOVERY.

"HIS WHEREABOUTS ARE
CURRENTLY UNKNOWN."

AND JUST IN CASE,
AS NEW MEMBERS, YOU'RE
UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE NATURE
OF OUR ORGANIZATION, THE
VASSALS OF THE MORNING
STAR HAVE ONE OBJECTIVE
WHEN IT COMES TO
VAMPIRES:

KILL THEM
ALL.



Taipan, 20 miles off the coast of Japan. 1943



Now.

I'M WRITING THIS TO SAY
GOODBYE, BABY.

LOOKS LIKE MY
GOOD LUCK
FINALLY RAN OUT.
THEY'RE ALL DEAD.
EVERYONE...

...EVEN SKINNER.



2010



Honolulu, Hawaii. One Month Earlier.

AND WHAT I'M MOST SORRY FOR, PEARL, IS NOT TELLING YOU THE TRUTH, BACK AT THE BEGINNING OF ALL THIS.

NO MORE SECRETS, THOUGH. NOT NOW, AT THE END. JUST THE TRUTH. AND THE TRUTH IS THAT ALL OF THIS, THE WHOLE NIGHTMARE, STARTED WITH AN OFFER.

A SIMPLE OFFER I SHOULD'VE WEIGHED MUCH, MUCH MORE CAREFULLY.

RING RING

MMMM. MAKE IT STOP.

YES MA'AM.

I WAS JUST DREAMING ABOUT YOU, MR. PRESTON.



BUT I WAS JUST SO
ANGRY, PEARL. ANGRY
AT YOU, AT ME, AT
THE WORLD.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHY, EITHER. IT DIDN'T MAKE
ANY SENSE. THAT WAS THE WORST PART.
BECAUSE WHEN YOU AND I, WHEN WE'D
DECIDED TO COME OUT OF HIDING, TO JOIN
THE EFFORT, WE BOTH KNEW IT WAS RISKY.

WE KNEW THERE WAS A CHANCE
THEY'D SEND ME OVERSEAS, INTO
COMBAT. HELL, I REMEMBER THE
DAY MY ASSIGNMENT CAME IN THE
MAIL, BEFORE I EVEN OPENED THE
THING I SAID THIS LITTLE PRAYER...

...A PRAYER ASKING ANYONE
UP THERE LISTENING TO
PLEASE, PLEASE AFTER ALL
WE'D BEEN THROUGH, TO
JUST LET ME STAY THERE
WITH YOU, STATESIDE.

AND THEN I OPENED THE LETTER...
AND GOT EXACTLY WHAT I'D ASKED
FOR, STRAIGHT FROM UNCLE SAM'S
MOUTH. "CONSIDERING AGE AND
PRIOR INJURIES..." I WAS STAYING
HAWAII.

SO I GOT MY WISH. I
WAS IN PARADISE, WITH
THE GIRL I LOVED...AND
IT WAS KILLING ME.





BECAUSE JUST ONE
FLOOR UP FROM MY STATION,
ROCHEFORT AND OP-20-G WERE
CODE-BREAKING JN-25...

...AND ALL DAY I COULD
HEAR THE SOUNDS OF NEW SHIPS
BEING BUILT. PLANES BEING TEST-
FLOWN. SHINY NEW P-51'S AND
F4U'S WITH THE PAINT STILL FRESH.

IT WAS LIKE YOU AND ME, WE'D
BEEN LIVING TOGETHER ALONE
SO LONG I'D LEARNED TO SEE
MYSELF AS YOU DID, TO SEE
MYSELF IN YOUR EYES. I'D
FORGOTTEN HOW I LOOKED
TO THE REST OF THE WORLD.

SIGH



FOR THE FIRST
TIME IN MY LIFE,
BABY... I FELT OLD.

BUT YOU
WERE STAYING
YOUNG.

AND EVERYONE
EXCEPT ME WAS
PART OF THIS
GREAT STRUGGLE
AGAINST EVIL...

...AND ALL I
WANTED WAS
TO GET IN
THE FIGHT.

I'M TELLING
YOU TO WATCH
YOUR MOUTH,
OLD MAN.

AND
IF I DON'T?
WHAT ARE YOU
GOING TO DO
ABOUT IT,
FOREFEY?

KRAK

WHAM

AW, I THINK HE
BROKE A HIP.

AND HERE I
THOUGHT THIS
PLACE WAS
HOT. COME
ON.

ALLOW ME,
MR. PRESTON.

BAP

AND JUST
HOW IS IT YOU
KNOW...



YOUR NAME?
I KNOW EVERYTHING
ABOUT YOU. IT MIGHT
BE FAIR TO SAY I
BLOODY INVENTED
YOU.



AS I LIVE AND
BREATHE, AGENT
HOBBS, WHAT
ARE YOU DOING
HERE?

YOU KNOW, MY COLLEAGUES
AND I, WE'VE WORKED VERY HARD THESE
PAST YEARS TO HONOR OUR DEAL WITH YOU.
WE'VE TRIED TO MAKE YOUR PRESENCE IN
THE WORLD--AS WELL AS YOUR WIFE'S--
UNDETECTABLE. IT'S A CHALLENGING TASK...

ONE MADE
SIGNIFICANTLY
MORE DIFFICULT
BY YOUR RECENT
ATTEMPT TO
ENLIST IN YOUR
COUNTRY'S
MILITARY.

NOW, WE CAN EFFECTIVELY HIDE
YOU AGAIN. WE HAVE GROWING TIES
TO YOUR GOVERNMENT. BUT YOU
SHOULD KNOW THAT ENLISTMENT
IS A MATTER OF PUBLIC
RECORD.

ANYONE
LOOKING FOR
YOU, ANYONE
WITH A
GRUDGE...



...MAY NOW BE
IN POSSESSION
OF YOUR PERSONAL
INFORMATION. RIGHT
DOWN TO YOUR
HOME ADDRESS.



WHAT DO YOU
WANT, HOBBS? AN
APOLOGY? YOU
CAN LOOK FOR ONE
AT THE BOTTOM
OF THE FUCKING
OCEAN FOR ALL
I CARE.



HOW GRACIOUS. I
DIDN'T COME HERE TO
BROWBEAT YOU. I'M HERE
TO MAKE YOU AN OFFER.
IF YOU'LL JUST JOIN ME
AT MY TABLE FOR
A DRINK.

THANKS,
BUT I'VE HAD
ENOUGH OF
YOUR
OFFERS.



ONE DRINK.
THAT'S ALL I'M
ASKING.

FOR OLD
TIMES'
SAKE.

...
ONE DRINK.
NOTHING
MORE.





VAMPIRES?
WHAT MAKES
YOU THINK
THAT?

FOLKLORE...
LOCAL RECORDS.
WE KEEP OUR EAR
TO THE GROUND, SO
TO SPEAK.



AND WHAT OUR INTELLIGENCE IS TELLING
US IS THAT THE ISLAND IS HOME TO
A NEST OF SOME KIND.



YOU STILL HAVEN'T
ANSWERED MY QUESTION: WHAT
DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ME?



LOOK
BEHIND ME
WOULD YOU?



THE FOUR
MEN AT THE TABLE
BEHIND OURS ARE PART
OF A SPECIAL TEAM MY
ORGANIZATION IS
ASSEMBLING.

EVERY ONE OF
THEM HAS COMBAT
EXPERIENCE. NOT JUST IN
CONVENTIONAL BATTLE, BUT
IN THE AGE-OLD BATTLE
AGAINST THE VAMPIRE
BLOODLINE...



...JUST
LIKE
YOU.

NOW,
AS WE
SPEAK, U.S.
FORCES ARE
PREPARING
TO LAUNCH A
FULL-SCALE
ATTACK ON
TAIPAN.

THE MEN AT THAT
TABLE WILL SHIP OUT
WITH THE SECOND
WAVE OF TROOPS
BOUND FOR THE
ISLAND.

MASKED AS A DIVISION OF ARMY SIGNAL CORPS,
THEY'LL BREACH THE ISLAND ALONG WITH THE
INVADING FORCES, AND SPEARHEAD A COVERT
INVESTIGATION OF THE SUSPECTED NEST TO
THE NORTH. THE MISSION IS SIMPLE: PROTECT
U.S. FORCES FROM ANY INDIGENOUS
VAMPIRES ON THE ISLAND.



WE'D LIKE
TO OFFER YOU
A SPOT IN THE
UNIT.



A
SPOT.

TELL ME
THIS, HOBBEST
WHY MET
WHAT'S YOUR
ANGLE?

MY
ANGLE?



RIGHT NOW YOU'RE
A LIABILITY TO ME,
STUMBLING AROUND,
LOOKING FOR
SOMEONE TO
FIGHT.



SO I'VE COME TO GIVE YOU WHAT YOU
WANT, MR. PRESTON. WE'RE OFFERING
YOU THE CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN
THE GREATEST FIGHT IN THE HISTORY
OF MANKIND--THE FIGHT
AGAINST EVIL.

I'M AFRAID
I'VE FINISHED MY
DRINK, AND YOU'RE
OUT OF TIME.
TELL YOUR BOYS
GOOD LUCK.



WE SHIP OUT
IN FOUR DAYS FROM
PEARL HARBOR. IF YOU
CHANGE YOUR MIND, I'LL
BE STAYING AT THE
GRAND HAWAIIAN HOTEL
ROOM 4B.

ALOHA,
MR. PRESTON.

OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, I DID EVERYTHING I COULD TO FORGET HOBBS AND HIS OFFER.



BUT NO MATTER WHAT I DID, I FELT LIKE I WAS JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS.

UH, HENRY? THIS SONG...

WHAT ABOUT IT, PEARL?



IT ENDED OVER A MINUTE AGO.

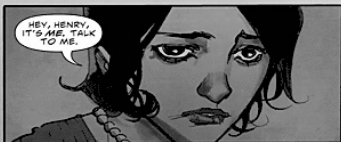
OH, SORRY, WON.

ALL RIGHT, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S EATING AT YOU?

NOTHING, HONEST. I'M JUST TIRED IS ALL.



HEY, HENRY, IT'S ME. TALK TO ME.



LET'S GO FOR A WALK.





BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, HOW COULD THEY CALL YOU UP TO FIGHT NOW? AFTER ALL THIS TIME, OUT OF NOWHERE?

BEATS ME. FOR ALL I KNOW, MACARTHUR PULLED MY NAME OUT OF A HAT.



GRANTED, I DID SOME SIGNAL CORPS WORK WITH THE 79TH, RUNNING SHORTWAVES, AND IT'S NOT TOUGH.

YOU HANG BACK UNTIL THE AREA IS CLEAR AND ALL.



BUT STILL, TO THINK OF ME DOING THAT KIND OF THING NOW, ACROSS THE PACIFIC...

SO WHAT'D YOU SAY?



BABY, HAVE YOU BEEN LISTENING TO ME AT ALL?

ONLY EVERY WORD.



I SAID NO.







"MR. PRESTON. I WAS
BEGINNING TO WORRY
YOU WEREN'T COMING."



THE FALSE MODESTY
IT DOESN'T SUIT YOU,
HOBBS.



FAIR
ENOUGH.

NOW, LET
ME INTRODUCE
YOU TO THE REST
OF THE TEAM.



FIRST, YOUR
COMMUNICATIONS
SPECIALIST, PRIVATE
JOHN TICKMAN.

I HEARD
YOU PLAY "JAZZ
MUSIC," HANK.
AND YOU DIDN'T
BRING YOUR
GUITAR?

NO.

WELL
THANK THE
LORD FOR
SMALL
FAVORS.



AND WE'RE OUR
COMMUNICATIONS
EXPERT...

LEAVE HIM
BE, TICK.

WELCOME
ABOARD,
HENRY.

CORPORAL
CALVIN POOLE.
EXPERT LINGUIST
AND TAXONOMIST.



SERGEANT FIRST
CLASS SAMUEL A.
LANTS, WEAPONS
AND EXPLOSIVES
TECHNICIAN.

I SAW
YOU FOUGHT IN
ARGONNE. WHAT
DETAIL WERE
YOU IN?

ENOUGH
OF THIS.

Nu mi!
Vorbec!
WE SHOULD
BOARD.

YOUR
PLATOON LEADER,
AND A SENIOR MEMBER
OF THE V.M.S. FROM
ROMANIA--VICAR
JAN MIRO.

GENTLEMEN,
I BID YOU
SAFE
PASSAGE.

AGAIN, GLAD
YOU COULD
JOIN US, MR.
PRESTON.

FUCK
YOU, TOO,
KOBES.



YOU WERE
LATE ARRIVING
THIS MORNING,
PRIVATE
PRESTON.

I'M SORRY.
I HAD A HARD
GOODBYE.



AH, A HARD
GOODBYE. THAT
MUST BE NICE.

THIS IS
YOUR FIRST
MISSION WITH
THE VASSALS,
YES?



I'M RANK SERGEANT
VICAR ROW, AND I'VE
DONE MY SHARE OF
FIGHTING.

NOT UNDER ME
YOU HAVEN'T.



THAT MAKES
YOU PRIVATE
PRESTON,
FOR NOW.

IS THAT
SOT

YES, IT IS SO. ARE
YOU COMING TO
QUARTERS?



NO.
ACTUALLY, I
THINK I COULD
USE SOME
AIR.

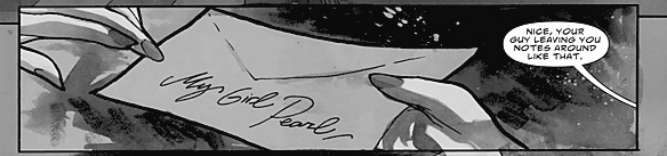


FOUND
THIS IN
YOUR BOX,
PEARL.



HEY, YOU
OKAY?

I'M FINE,
MASS. JUST
TIRED IS ALL.
THANKS.



NICE, YOUR
GUY LEAVING YOU
NOTES AROUND
LIKE THAT.

My Girl Pearl,



I WISH MINE WAS THAT ROMANTIC. YOU'RE
A LUCKY ONE, HONEY.

Check room 4B at the
Grand Hawaiian Hotel.
Your man is lying to you,
dolly. Don't worry, though,
I'm about to punish him
good enough for both
of us.

Love always,
Skinner Sweet

I CAN SAY IT ALL STARTED
WITH ENLISTING. OR WITH
HOBBES...

...BUT THAT WOULDN'T BE
TRUE. AND THAT'S WHAT
ALL THIS IS ABOUT, PEARL.
TELLING THE TRUTH.



THE TRUTH IS JUST LIKE I
TOLD YOU AT THE START OF
THIS LETTER. BECAUSE THIS
WHOLE TERRIBLE NIGHTMARE...



HEY,
BOSS...

...IT ALL STARTED WITH A
SIMPLE, SWEET OFFER.

...NEED A
LIGHT?



GHOST WAR

SCOTT SNYDER WRITER RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE ART & COVER

DAVE MCCAIG COLORED STEVE WANDS LETTERS JOE HUGHES ASSISTANT EDITOR MARK DOYLE EDITOR

AMERICAN VAMPIRE CREATED BY SNYDER & ALBUQUERQUE

ON THE

LEDGE

BY **Rafael Albuquerque**

Mark Doyle makes my work harder.

By making this polemical statement, I'm not trying to get fired off *AMERICAN VAMPIRE*. Not at all!

It's just important to say it this way to make it clear how challenging and scary jumping on this project was.

We first talked about two years ago. I was comfortably drawing the superhero title *Blue Beetle* and had just been promoted to *Superman/Batman*. Doing that was like my top dream when I was 13 or 14 years old. I wasn't a kid anymore though, and I was really looking for something different.

I wanted to work on more mature stories, and go crazier with my inking and storytelling. However, when you draw classic superhero comics, that's not an easy thing to do. I was really feeling comfortable doing those stories, but not exactly happy or satisfied.

When Mark and Will (Dennis) invited me to draw *AMERICAN VAMPIRE*, they said they were looking for someone who could draw different styles, and could manage with two different timeline narratives.

I had absolutely no idea about how to do that, but the idea of working for Vertigo with those amazing guys was something that made me leave my "comfort zone" for the first time.

The first issue of *AMERICAN VAMPIRE* was a very tense production. I took about 4 months to get those 32 pages done. I was freaking out about the quality, and the wash style (that was a last-minute decision, btw), and then I figured out the kind of editor I was working with. Mark wasn't the "deadline" kind. He wanted quality.

That guy wouldn't be tricked easily. I would have to push myself to do the best work I could, or die trying.

Every time I have to do a cover, it's a headache.

Every time we start a new arc, Mark, Scott and I talk a lot about the approach we need, and discuss the references as much as we can, to make it as good as possible. Always out of our comfort zones.

This month's issue brings a brand new arc, a brand new story. This time, our adventure happens in WW2 and we needed that gritty and bloody feel. I'm using all washes now. A lot of ink splats and a very rough kind of style. A new style of art for the arc that is, right now, my very favorite story in *AMERICAN VAMPIRE* so far.

Got to go now. I have a lot of pages to paint. I'll probably have to work over this weekend.

Mark is the kind of guy who wants the artist to give his blood for the book and, especially in a vampire book, this is not a bad thing.

Thanks for making me a better artist.

—Rafa

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RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE

was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Rafael has been working in the American comic book industry since 2005. Best known for his work on the *Savage Brothers*, *Blue Beetle* and *Superman/Batman*, he has also worked on the creator-owned graphic novels *Crimelord* and *Mondo Urbano*.



minutemen



Many thanks for the va

Scans 'n' edits



variant cover

